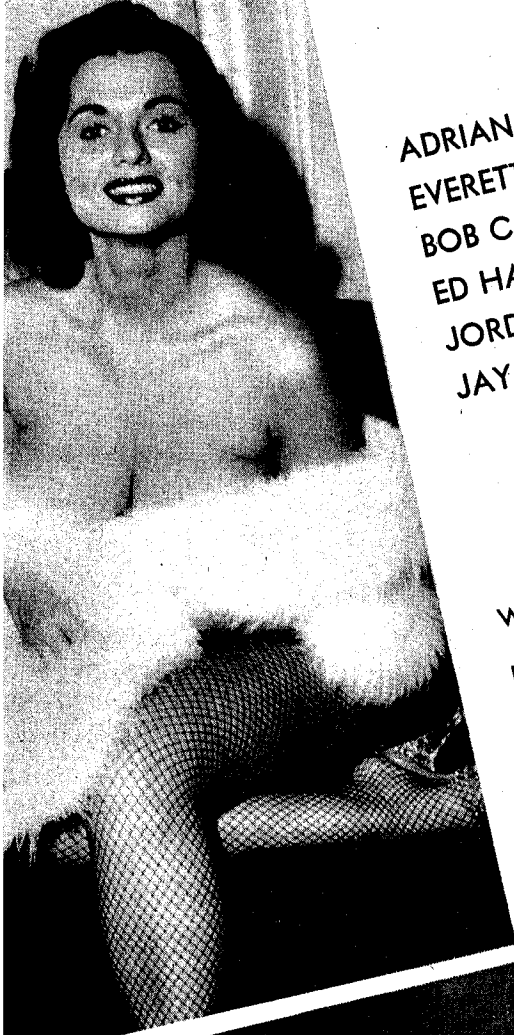


NOTE: A different
version of this story
later appeared as
"A Helping Hand."



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BRAINS AGAINST LEAD

A gun can get you only so far—
even against an unarmed man

By JACK RITCHIE

I SLAMMED down the hood of the car and the sound echoed down the lonely country road.

Under my rage, I felt the stirrings of panic and quickly pulled myself together. There was no percentage in losing my head now. My hand touched the automatic in my pocket for reassurance.

I had to have another car and I had to have it fast. I squinted into the afternoon sun, trying to locate a farmhouse, but I could see none.

My left side brushed against the side of the car and I winced as the pain from the shoulder wound raced through my body. I cursed the cashier of the hick bank who had been hero enough to step on the alarm button. He was a dead hero now and maybe the sheriff who tried to stop me was too.

I worked a cigarette out of a pack with my right hand and lit it. I couldn't walk far, not with the sheriff's slug in my shoulder, but right now it looked like that was the only thing left for me to do.

I WAS about to start when I caught the sound of a motor and in a few moments a battered old sedan pulled over the hill of the gravel road.

I waited until it was a hundred yards away and then stepped into the road and held up my hand.

The sedan came to a stop and an elderly man put his head out of the window. "Having trouble?"

I nodded and studied the old car with distaste. If this was the only thing I could get, it would have to do. "Not much traffic here," I said.

The old man smiled. "I doubt if half a dozen cars use this road all day. You're lucky I came along."

That made up my mind. I took the automatic out of my coat pocket. "All right, old man, get out of that car and make it fast."

He blinked at the gun and was about to protest. Then he shrugged and managed a weak smile. "I must say that you haven't picked up a bargain. This car's got over ninety thousand miles behind it."

He came out of the car carrying a small black bag.

When I made no move to get in the car, he cleared his throat uneasily. "Well, there it is. Take it."

I smiled slightly. "It's not that easy for you, old man. Walk to the side of the road."

He could see it in my eyes, the fact that I was going to kill him.

"Good heavens, man," he said, his voice hoarse with shock. "You can't kill a human being just because you want to steal a ten-year old car."

I kept smiling. "There's more to it than that. I need hours of time and I don't think you're going to let me have it. If I let you live, the first thing you'll do is get to a phone and call the police."

My eyes went to the bag he still held and I read the faded gold lettering, "Dr. James Ferguson."

I looked back at him and grinned slowly. "Maybe my luck isn't all bad today."

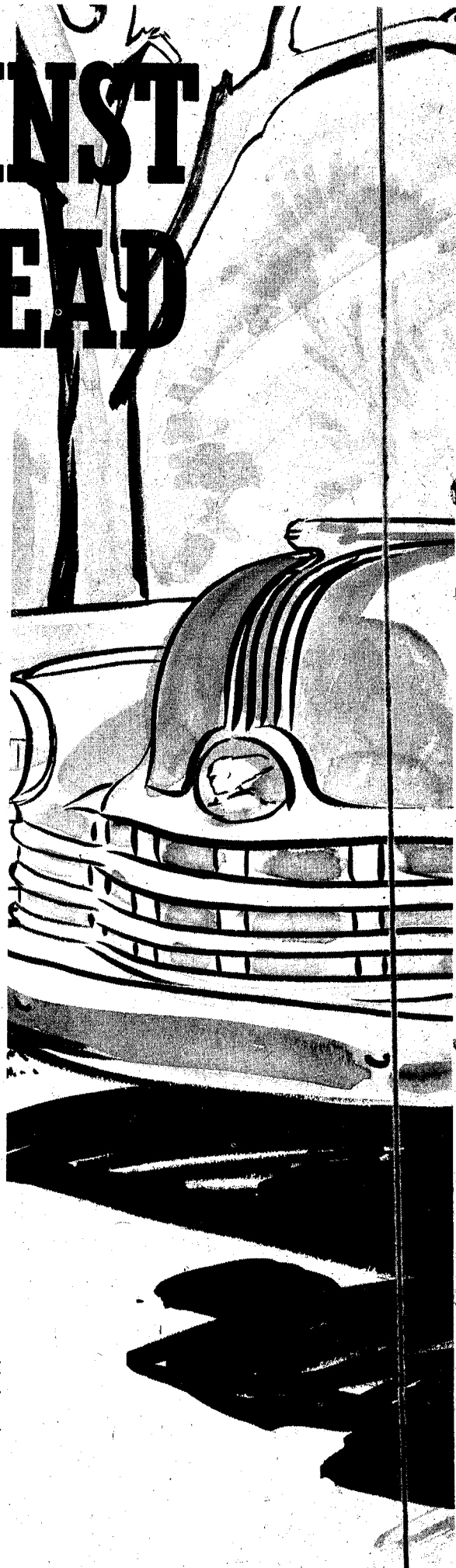
He stared at me uncertainly, not knowing what I meant.

I UNBUTTONED my topcoat and pointed to the blood-stained piece of shirt I'd used to bandage my shoulder. "Take a look at it, doc. But be real careful not to do anything that might make me nervous."

He hesitated, looking into my eyes, and then shrugged faintly. He untied the knot carefully and pulled the cloth from the wound. I winced as it stuck to the dried blood.

He pursed his lips as he studied
(Continued on page 48)

I raised the automatic. "This is a reprieve, doc,"
I said. "Just so long as I need you, you're alive."







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THE night air had become cooler, and in the distance a rumble of thunder and a flash of lightning promised rain. The streets were deserted as the cool air had given relief from the heat and people had gone home.

The man moved along the tree-lined street where the shadows were deep. She could barely make out his form in front of her. He turned into a driveway and she moved closer. They walked to the back of a large, two story white house. He inserted a key in the door and stepped inside. She hesitated.

"Come on, honey, it's all right."

She moved into the darkness of the hall, and he took her hand, leading her along the hall to a door. He turned the knob and the door swung open. He crossed the room and pulled the blinds, then clicked on the bedside lamp.

She looked at him across the room. He was around six feet or better with sandy, blond hair in a crew cut. His lean face with shining eyes made him look around thirty.

He moved toward her and put his arms around her waist. She seemed to be frozen as she stared into his eyes. His lips pressed against hers.

"God, what a girl, what a sweet young thing."

His hands played over her body and she could feel herself trembling. He picked her up in his arms and carried her toward the bed.

"Wait, honey." She whispered. "Since we're alone let's do it up right."

"What?" He mumbled.

"I'll freshen up a bit in the bathroom, while you get ready."

He set her down. "For someone so damn young you're pretty smart."

"You'll like what you see."

"I already do."

She gave his nose a playful tug. "The bathroom?"

He nodded toward the door.

"Across the hall."

"I'll only be a jiff."

He watched her move through the door and his body trembled with anticipation. He undressed and lay back on the bed.

IN the bathroom Mary put on fresh lipstick, then studied her appearance in the large mirror. The slow smile played on her lips as she carefully wrapped some tissue around a water glass, produced a small vial from her skirt pocket and emptied its contents into the glass. Humming softly, she snapped off the light.

He heard her come out of the bathroom. She came through the door and he watched her move toward the bed. A teenage blonde goddess with a ripe smile on her

red lips. She paused, her hands behind her back. "You want to leave the light on Dan?"

He swallowed. "Yeah."

She bent over him. "Look at me, Dan."

"I'm looking, I haven't done anything else."

Her right hand flashed out. Something splashed into his face. Into his eyes. He jerked his hands up to wipe away the liquid. She moved away and he could hear her laughing. He felt the burning start, he stumbled from the bed and through a dim blur saw her go through the door. He heard her running through the hall, then the closing of the outside door.

She was on the sidewalk when the screaming began.

"My eyes! Oh God! My eyes!"

She hurried along the street, she was free. Free from the eyes. The knowledge ran through her body into every fiber. Then she shuddered for she had been free from them before. They always came back, but now she knew how to fight. She knew how to rid herself of the eyes that lusted on her body. It would take time for there were so many, but she would be free from them if only for a little while.

She began to hum as she hurried along the street. The thunder was close, she must hurry for her mother would worry if she was out in a storm.

THE END

BRAINS vs. LEAD

(Continued from page 25)

the wound. "The bullet just missed the brachial artery." There was a touch of regret in his voice. "Another inch higher and you would have bled to death."

He stepped back. "That bullet will have to be removed as soon as possible."

I wiped the sweat from my forehead and looked him over. Just a country doctor, but in this case he would have to do. "All right, doc. Get busy."

He opened his mouth slightly.

I raised my gun. "This is a reprieve, doc. As long as I need you, you're alive. And I think every second is precious to you now."

He swallowed hard. "I couldn't do anything for you here. There are too many dangers. You might possibly hemorrhage and I doubt if I could stop the bleeding without the facilities at my office." He licked his lips. "It's only about five miles from here. We could get there in ten minutes."

I felt another one of my waves of faintness and fought it off. I couldn't last much longer if something wasn't done. I motioned to his

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car with my gun. "All right. You do the driving."

As we topped a rise two miles later, I saw a car partially blocking the intersection a half mile ahead.

I leaned forward. "What's that up there?"

The doc stirred uneasily. "I don't know. That's Jim Holman's car. He's a county deputy."

I cursed softly and gripped my gun.

As we came nearer, the deputy got out of his car. I thought he looked relaxed and I figured that he probably recognized the doc's car.

The doc rubbed the steering wheel with moist fingers. "We'll have to stop."

I put the automatic back in my topcoat pocket. "Just remember that I'm with you and that I've got my hand on this gun. Don't use any words I can't understand. If he asks about me, say that I'm a friend of yours. A long time friend. Don't forget that I can take care of that cop and you before he knows what's happening."

He sighed heavily and I could feel the new hope going out of him.

He slowed the car to a stop. "Anything wrong here, Jim?"

THE deputy grinned. "This is supposed to be a roadblock, doc. But so far you've been the only customer. Didn't you hear about the killing up north?"

The doc shook his head. "No. I'm afraid not."

The deputy leaned on the window ledge of doc's car. "Somebody tried to rob the bank up at Miller's Falls early this morning. He didn't get any money, but he killed the cashier and wounded the sheriff. He made his getaway in a dark blue sedan."

The doc cleared his throat and indicated me. "This is a friend of mine, Jim. I've known him for a long time."

The deputy put his hand through the open window. "Jim Holman's the name. Glad to meet any friend of the doc's."

I could feel the doc tense and I knew what he was hoping for. He wanted me to take my right hand off the gun in my pocket in order to shake hands. When I did that, he would have a chance.

I looked into the deputy's eyes for a moment without moving. Then I slowly raised my left hand. The pain flashed through my body, but I kept my face from showing it.

I grinned stiffly. "Chris Jenson. Don't feel insulted if I shake with the left, Jim, but I got a pretty bad cut on my right. Isn't that right, doc?"

Doc kept his eyes on the steering wheel and took a deep breath. "That's right, Jim. I had to take

several stitches. It was quite a job."

The deputy looked at him for a moment and then shook my left hand. "You have to watch those things. Infection might set in."

The doc smiled slightly. "I don't think Chris has to worry. I've been giving him penicillin."

The deputy let go of my hand and leaned on the car once more. "Making a call, doc?"

The doc shook his head. "No. I've had enough of measles and chicken pox for one day. I'm going to put the car in the garage and get some rest."

The deputy moved away from the car. "Better make a detour at the next junction, doc. The road after that's nothing but mud."

THE doc glanced at his rear view mirror as he pulled around the patrol car. I looked back too. The deputy was inspecting one of his tires.

I grinned. "You did real nice, doc."

He kept his speed down to twenty miles an hour and it began to irritate me. "You can make better time than that, doc."

He was slightly peevish. "It's a rough road and I've got bad springs."

It took him fifteen minutes to reach the outskirts of a small village. He drove down one of the side streets and turned into an alley.

I sat up. "What's this for?"

"My garage is back here."

I relaxed. Let him put the car away. When I was ready to leave I ought to be able to pick up a better car in this town. I glanced at him and smiled. He wouldn't be needing this car anymore either.

He stopped in front of a small garage and opened the car door.

I got out of the other side and I was closing the door with my right hand when Deputy Holman stepped from behind the thick lilac bushes with a shotgun in his hands.

"Don't move, mister!" he snapped.

My right hand moved down an inch to my pocket.

The deputy's eyes were hard. "Don't try it, mister. Not unless you want your head blown off."

I put my hands slowly over my head.

The doc took the automatic out of my pocket and his voice was light with relief. "I drove as slow as I could, Jim. I was hoping you told me about that detour so that you'd have enough time to get here."

The deputy grinned. "When I knew something was wrong, I had to be careful. I thought I'd better not try anything as long as he was sitting right next to you, doc. I figured he must have had his hand on a gun."

I stared at the doc, wondering

what he had done or said to spoil everything.

The deputy slipped the handcuffs over my wrists and I flinched as the pain flared from my left shoulder.

"The least you can do is take out this bullet, doc," I snapped.

The deputy pushed me toward the walk leading to the front of the doctor's house. "We'll have that bullet taken out, but Doc Ferguson isn't going to be the one to do it. That isn't his line. Not even treating a cut hand."

In front of the house, he pointed to a neat sign that read, "James Ferguson. Doctor of Veterinary Medicine."

THE END

THE PSYCHIATRIST

(Continued from page 18)

I faced the front, saying nothing to the poor woman. Stekel mentions tactile neurotics. They are easily subject to hysteria, and a crowded elevator is no place to confront them with their problem.

I left the elevator, maintaining a dignified silence. As I passed the elevator-operator he dug me in the ribs and murmured, "Get your kicks, pops?"

I wonder what his neurosis is?

THE END

WINNER EAT ALL

(Continued from page 8)

enemy in his strong, pointed jaws which can easily amputate a man's finger. If he misses the target he'll be instantly filled with one ounce of paralyzing nerve agent from the hypodermic fangs of the habu.

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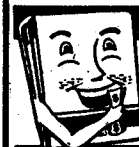
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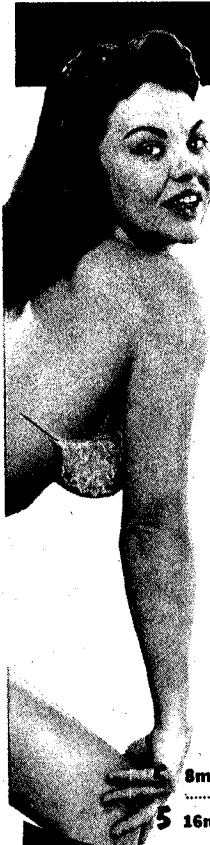
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